

FT

MEADE

4PZ

177

Copy 1

THE BUSY BEAVERS ROUND TOP

ELLEN D. WANGNER



Henry Wangner

THE ROUND TOP BOOKS

4 E PZ
177



AS THE SUN SANK, THE WOODS WERE
LIGHTED WITH THE MOST BEAUTIFUL
COLORS. PAGE 44.

THE ROUND-TOP BOOKS

THE BUSY BEAVERS
OF
ROUND - TOP

By

ELLEN D. WANGNER

*Author of "Bobby Lynx of Round-Top,"
"Mother Fox of Round-Top," etc.*



ILLUSTRATIONS BY
HENRY WANGNER

NEW YORK
THE NOURSE COMPANY
PUBLISHERS

Copyright, 1921,
BY
THE NOURSE COMPANY

AUG -8 '21

© CLA 622353

CONTENTS

I.	TWO LITTLE STRANGERS COME TO ROUND-TOP	9
II.	THE BEAVERS FINISH THE DAM .	22
III.	IN WHICH MOTHER BEAVER HAS AN ACCIDENT	34
IV.	FATHER BEAVER'S ADVENTURE .	53
V.	NEW CITIZENS IN BEAVER-TOWN .	71
VI.	LITTLE BROTHER MEETS SOME ENEMIES	85
VII.	MR. OTTER GOES SLIDING	98
VIII.	THE FOREST FIRE	110

ILLUSTRATIONS

	PAGE
As the sun sank, the woods were lighted with the most beautiful colors	<i>Frontispiece</i>
The outer and lower side of the dam was a tangle of sticks	22
The first part of a beaver's house looks like a hollow pile of sticks with mud over them	36
Having such a good time that Mother Beaver did not like to take them home	82
The Otter was sliding down the snowy, icy mound	106

The Busy Beavers of Round-Top

CHAPTER I

TWO LITTLE STRANGERS COME TO ROUND-TOP

IT was summertime on Round-Top Hill and all the little forest-people were as busy as they could be! Mother Lynx and Grandmother Black-Bear and Mollie Rabbit and the foxes and the wood-chucks and porcupines were hard at work training their families, playing and frolicking on the friendly mountain that was so big that it gave them all a home and a big playground as well.

Down at the foot of the Hill were the

10 THE BUSY BEAVERS OF ROUND-TOP

marshes, filled with hundreds of young frog children, and Long Pond glimmered and glistened in the bright summer sunshine as if it were laughing over some precious secret. And that is exactly what it was doing, for a new family had just moved into the end of the Pond where a stream came bubbling and tumbling down the mountainside.

Long Pond was very shallow here. In fact, it was scarcely more than a marsh in the summertime. On the flat ground between the Pond and the Hill, the young birch trees and poplars and maples were growing larger and larger each year until they looked as if they were an army marching on the Pond to drive it right away from the Hill. The young trees, with their long, lacy roots, would soon make a woodland out of the marshy end of the Pond!

But that morning, two fury little

strangers had suddenly appeared at this identical spot. Where they had come from, the Pond did not know. But it was very glad to see them. Now this tree-army would be sent flying, for the two little strangers were a pair of beavers that had come to start a new Beaver-Town at the foot of Round-Top. And well did Long Pond know what would happen to those birch and beech and poplar trees and the saucy alder bushes along the banks of the stream!

So the Pond rippled and smiled and it didn't tell the secret even to the summer wind. The wind was very lazy that day, —he wasn't blowing at all and so he did not learn the Pond's secret and could not tell it to the other forest-folk on Round-Top. It was a secret that Mother Fox and Mrs. Lynx and Grandfather Black-Bear would have liked very much to know, for, if there be one thing that

Mother Lynx and these other folk like to have for breakfast, it is a nice, fat beaver!

But no one knew about them, so they waddled busily about, trying to decide just exactly where to locate their town and build their dam. And at last they found it. The stream broadened out on the flat, marshy plain and rippled in and around some big rocks that the frost had sent rolling down the mountain. So far had they rolled and bumped and bounced down the hillside that they had landed quite a distance out on the plain. And there they were, right in the midst of the birch thicket.

The beavers were very much excited as they saw this spot, for here was flat land where their dam would make the waters spread out until it surrounded all the little trees,—just the food they wanted for winter! Oh, it was a beauti-

ful spot and exactly right for a Beaver-Town! The big rocks would help to hold the dam and the little trees would furnish them with all the bark and tender buds they needed for food.

It was indeed a fine place to start a new town and Mr. and Mrs. Beaver stood up on their short hind legs and thumped the earth ker-whack with their tails, which was their way of showing how pleased and excited they were.

Now the beavers, although they have such beautiful fur, are far from being beautiful animals,—that is, when they are out of the water. And Mr. and Mrs. Beaver looked very odd as they stood deciding about the place where they were going to build their new home. They were so very much alike that *you* could not tell them apart. Each was about two feet long,—not counting their tails,—each weighed about thirty-five pounds,

each was clumsy and fat and covered with thick, soft, creamy-looking fur so close to their bodies that it was like a fleece, with a top fur of long, glistening brown hairs. Their coats were very beautiful and each coat was water-proof so that they could stay in the water all they wished to without getting a bit wet! Which was a very fine thing for Mr. and Mrs. Beaver, as they spent so much of their time in the water!

Now Mr. and Mrs. Beaver were distant cousins of the squirrel family, and in their faces they looked very much like huge squirrels, with small, light-brown eyes, and small, round ears covered with fur. But their teeth were not like Mrs. Gray-Squirrel's at all! For both Mr. and Mrs. Beaver had long, orange-colored front teeth that looked like yellow chisels sticking out from their lips.

But their tails were the most peculiar

part of these queer little animals. They were not one bit like the fluffy, plumpy tail of Mother Gray-Squirrel. They were flat, stiff, paddle-shaped affairs about a foot long and covered with a shiny, blackish-gray, horny skin that looked like scales! No other animal in the world has a tail like a beaver! And no one knows quite all the uses he makes of this tail, either. When frightened, he gives the water a loud slap with it that sends the alarm to all his family and the whole town. When swimming, his tail acts as a rudder. And now, as Mr. and Mrs. Beaver talked about their beautiful new home, they displayed another use for their tails, for they half-sat down on the grassy bank, using their stiff tails to prop them up.

The back feet of the beavers were webbed like those of a duck, but their little forefeet were exactly like a squirrel's.

They looked almost like little hands and as Mrs. Beaver bit off a small, delicious birch twig near her and held it up in her little paws to nibble, she looked like a dainty little old lady dressed all in fur.

But the beavers did not sit on the bank very long. There was such a lot of work to be done that Mrs. Beaver soon threw her birch twig away and she and Father Beaver waded and waddled out to the centre of the stream, as if to see just what ought to be done first. And Father Beaver did not take a very long time to decide. A dam must be built as soon as possible! Even before a home was built!

The little stream was so low that the marsh was already beginning to dry up, and as the front door of a beaver's house must be covered with water at all times, Father Beaver knew that it would be useless to dig a burrow or build a house, as all the foxes and the wolves on Round-

Top would see their front door and know exactly where he and Mother Beaver could be found for breakfast or a nice supper! No, indeed! That could never be! That stream must be made both to spread out and grow deeper at once and a dam was the means of making it do that!

Now both Mr. and Mrs. Beaver knew that they were running a great risk if they worked in the daytime, but,—oh, dear! There was so much to be done, and besides, it was so hot and the sun so bright, probably all the other animals would be asleep getting ready for their hunting trips at night. So they just decided to get to work at once, hoping that Mother Fox and Grandfather Black-Bear would not see them!

Mr. and Mrs. Beaver did not need to tell each other what to do! Each went right to work without a word, for each of them had been a very capable worker in

the little Beaver-Town in which they had grown up. Gnawing down some alder bushes, both Mr. and Mrs. Beaver floated and guided them to the spot in the stream where they were going to begin work. They did not begin to build their dam at the banks of the stream. Oh no, indeed! They began exactly in the centre, where the current was strongest and would float the bushes out in the exact direction that the dam must take if it were to stand the pressure of the water when the Pond grew full. Just how the beaver knows that he must let the current tell him how to shape his dam so that it will hold, is one of Mother Nature's secrets.

Both Mr. and Mrs. Beaver knew this secret very well, however, and so they floated the alder bushes down to the spot where they wanted the dam and the laughing, rippling stream thought it lots of fun to straighten these bushes out with

their brushy ends down stream. But they did not float away, although the stream tried hard to make them. It pulled at them and flowed through their leaves and danced and sang about them until the little bushes just longed to dance away with it. But there was work for these alder bushes to do and Mr. and Mrs. Beaver meant to see that they did it!

Before the little stream could pull the bushes away, the beavers forced them to the bottom and made them lie there by heaping mud and stones on them! Oh, how hard Father and Mother Beaver worked, scooping the stones up with their "hands" and piling them quickly on the bushes! Sometimes they waded clear over to the banks for some especially large stones, rolling and pushing some so large that it seemed impossible for these little animals to move them.

After fastening down a number of the

alder bushes so that they could not get away, they quickly cut down some saplings with their yellow teeth-chisels, and these were laid over the bushes with more mud and stones and grass and moss placed on top. And now the little stream began to help more, although it did not know that it was helping. As the dam began to spread, the water worked harder and harder to press through, but this pressure of the water only managed to drive the moss and earth more tightly in among the alder bushes.

By this time the beavers were very tired, so they bit off some tender birch twigs and had a delicious supper. The sun dropped behind old Round-Top and a whippoorwill flew down close beside the dam. Then Night began to fold up in her soft, black coat, the hill and all the little forest-people, and the whippoorwill called out its queer little song:—“*Purple*

—*whip-purple-whip-whip* — *poor-will.*" When, like a piece of black tissue-paper, he fluttered away, the beavers went back to work.

CHAPTER II

THE BEAVERS FINISH THE DAM

WHEN morning came, the little stream seemed to sound very cross. He did not quite know whether he liked this tight belt that the beavers were tying right across him, and he made quite a fuss as he swirled and whirled around the ends of the dam that were coming closer and closer to the shore! By this time, the inner surface of the dam looked quite like a smooth bank of earth, while the outer and lower side was a tangle of sticks and small logs that poked up very much like an orderly brush pile.

The little stream, grown deeper now, hurled itself at this new girdle that it was being forced to wear, but it did no good.



THE OUTER AND LOWER SIDE OF THE DAM
WAS A TANGLE OF STICKS. PAGE 22.

The dam held very well and all that the stream could do was to find little holes in the moss and earth and sticks through which it could work its way. As soon as a little hole was discovered, the mischievous water hurried through it as fast as it could, carrying off some bits of earth here and a leaf or stick there.

Then either Mr. or Mrs. Beaver would swim over with fresh material to stop this leak, and thus it became a game between the beavers and the stream. When the stream found every part of the face of the dam so solid that it could not get through, off it would dash to the ends of the dam, ripping off twigs and grass and leaves and running away with them to Long Pond where they bobbed around in the sunshine.

The beavers were *very* tired. They had worked all night and they would have liked very much to go to a nice beaver

house and sleep. But no beaver home was ready for them, so they stole off to a big beech tree that had had most of the earth washed away from around its roots in a spring flood, and there they curled up for a nap after digging a shallow burrow in the bank close by the roots. If Mother Lynx or Mrs. Fox had been hunting that way that morning, or if an otter had come up from the lower end of Long Pond, the beavers' dam would never have been finished! But no enemy came to disturb them, and as the evening shadows once more crept out over the Pond, Mr. and Mrs. Beaver rushed eagerly back to work.

And the first task that night ought to have been to dig a burrow or build a house, but Father Beaver found a muddy bank where he and Mother Beaver dug out a small burrow that would answer very well until they got the dam built and could take time to make both a real house

and a burrow. Then they rushed to work on the dam, and by the time that morning came once more, the dam had grown to look very much like a huge measuring-worm stretched across the stream.

One end of the dam had reached one of the big rocks, and here both Mr. and Mrs. Beaver worked as hard as they could, carrying good-sized logs and sticks down the stream to be piled up against the rock. Mud and grass and roots were plastered securely in all the spaces, and little by little the stream was forced back until it began to spread out and out. First one little birch tree and then another and another began to find its roots getting wetter and wetter! Back the waters spread, right up to the hill itself in some places, and still the dam grew and grew.

The ground was so flat that the dam had to be very long to keep the stream from spreading out until it could run away

around the ends of the dam. Oh, how Mr. and Mrs. Beaver worked! All night long!—and sometimes, when it was a dark, rainy day, they worked daytimes, too! Poor Mrs. Beaver felt her jaws aching so hard some mornings that she could hardly eat her breakfast!

But she felt repaid for even such tired jaws and sore teeth when she looked at the beautiful dam that she and Father Beaver had made! Its top was quite level and the water trickled over it very evenly along its whole length. This was the sure test of a well-built dam, for if they had built it so that the water had all spilled over in one place, the little stream might have grown strong enough in that especial spot to have washed the dam away! For the little stream was little no longer now, and it could scold and growl and roar in quite an ugly way when it wished to! It was about a foot deeper above the

dam than it had been, and as it dashed itself at one of the big rocks in the dam, it seemed to be telling the rock to clear out and let it pass; and the stream's voice sounded quite gruff!

And then, one morning, the little stream raced away to Long Pond with another secret,—several more beavers had appeared and were busy at the dam! They had been driven out of their own town by wolves and bears and had followed Father and Mother Beaver to this new village. And now they all set to work together, for the beavers are the most social of all the little forest-people, as they not only like to live close beside one another but they all join in working at something which is to be of help to every one in the little town.

Soon the dam was carried far across the swamp so that it would make a broader Pond where a really large town of bea-

vers could find plenty to eat, and where there would be room for any number of burrows and lodges, as the beavers' houses are called. By this time, the little stream did not mind being held back at all. In fact, he was quite proud of himself, and he spread out farther and farther and grew deeper and deeper until all that was left of some of the swamp was a few grassy mounds or islands rising above the waters.

But the stream was still fond of playing pranks and every time it got a chance to force a hole through the dam, it would do so, and then how the beavers worked to patch up the hole! All through the summer this game kept up, and it was a very good thing that Father and Mother Beaver had some friends to help them. If they had not, the stream might have won in the merry little game it played.

The summer was passing, and there

was a great deal of work yet to do! Mr. and Mrs. Beaver decided that they must get to work at once on both their house and their burrow,—there was not a moment to be lost! They had already spent too much time on the dam,—too much entirely! There was all of the winter food to be gathered, canals to be cut to some delicious trees at the foot of the hill, and the lodge must not only be built, but must be plastered with several thick coats of mud before winter came.

Father Beaver was terribly worried because they had taken so long to build the dam, and he and Mother Beaver set earnestly to work at their burrow. Now they just could not go to any bank that they happened to see and scoop out their burrow like a rabbit or a woodchuck could do. There were several very important facts to be taken into consideration before the beavers could start this work.

The *first* thing to be talked over was the location of the bank itself. It must be at the edge of the Pond so that the front door of the burrow would be down under the water, and so far down that there would be no danger of Jack Frost freezing it shut some cold night. The *second* fact was that it must end up under the roots of some tree, or at the foot of the hill where the end of it would not be seen when they broke through the earth, with several little holes to let the air come into the burrow. And the *third* fact to be thought about was to have this burrow quite close to their lodge where they were to live. For, you see, this burrow was to be a sort of fort to which they could escape if a bear or a wolf or a MAN managed to destroy their lodge. Oh, the beaver family had many, many things to think of, and both Mr. and Mrs. Beaver waddled here and there on the land and

swam busily about in the water trying to decide on the very best possible spot!

Now all the other beavers were doing the same thing, and the little stream rippled with laughter as it saw them waddling about so earnestly on its banks! At last, Father and Mother Beaver found the very spot they had been looking for and at once they began to work. They could make the farther end of their tunnel come out right among the roots of the friendly beech tree that had sheltered them when they first came to Long Pond. It would take quite a long tunnel to do this, one almost twenty feet long, in fact, but they were accustomed to very hard work and they knew they could manage this task, somehow.

It surely was a difficult thing to do, but Father Beaver set about it with a will. Diving down under the water, he began to scoop out the bank, working as rapidly

as he knew how, and then coming to the top for a breath of air while Mother Beaver took her turn at shovelling out the sand and dirt. Turn and turn about they worked all night, and when morning came, they had made a very good beginning. Oh, but they were tired and they went for a long swim in the Pond and rested in the sun on a log that stuck out of the water. Very soon they returned to their task, for they meant to work all day since the work was underground where no enemy would be apt to find them.

Resting every once in a while, taking many a swim to clean the mud out of their fur and taking only a very few naps, they pushed on so rapidly that it was not long until their upward-slanting burrow came out exactly where they wanted it to,—right under the roots of the old beech. They did not let it open out there

like the mouth of a tunnel, for, if they had, Mother Fox might have caught them. They just broke through the earth enough to let a little air come in and these holes were carefully hidden by the roots of the tree. Here, underneath the little openings, they scooped out a large room where a number of them could safely hide in time of danger.

No engineer could have dug a better tunnel with big electric shovels than did these furry little fellows with only their small paws to use as scoops. And no engineer, no matter how wise he was, could have made his tunnel come out more exactly in the desired spot than did these little creatures who had to work down in the dark where it was hard even to breathe! It was, indeed, a wonderful piece of work, and Father and Mother Beaver had a right to be very proud of their skill.

CHAPTER III

IN WHICH MOTHER BEAVER HAS AN ACCIDENT

ALL the other beavers had tunnels built by this time, some having dug their burrows before working on the dam at all. Others had their houses built and were now ready to prepare them for winter. Father and Mother Beaver had not taken the time to build a house. Father Beaver was the oldest and wisest beaver in the village and he felt that the whole responsibility of the dam lay on his furry shoulders! And he was not the kind of a citizen to shirk when duty called him. If the dam were not built, the waters would not keep high during the winter and then,—of what use would their houses

and burrows be? None whatever! And so the dam was built and it was large and solid and strong. Oh, he was a very wise old beaver indeed!

After the burrow was finished, he was just a little bit undecided whether to build a house or not. Some of the other beavers were going to live in their burrows all winter and he was very strongly tempted to do the same, and then build his house when spring came. Most of the winter's supply of food was still to be brought in and sunk to the bottom of the Pond and weighted down by stones, so that he and Mother Beaver could get it easily in the winter-time. Father Beaver thought that this was about all they could manage before old King Winter came with his silvery soldiers of ice to lock up all the ponds and streams.

But Mother Beaver would not have it that way at all! She wanted a house and

a house she was going to have, even if she had to do the work all herself, and she swam away to a grassy island in the Pond, determined to begin work at once. There was only one thing for dear old Father Beaver to do, and that was to go right after her and help all that he could. And that is exactly what he did!

Now a beaver's lodge, by the time that it is all completed, is just as wonderful as his burrow or the dams he builds, but when he finishes the first part of it, that house looks more like a hollow pile of sticks with some mud spattered over them than anything else. Mrs. Beaver had selected a very good island for their home. It was really solid ground and not just a high bit of marsh, so, in just a few moments she was able to get right to work.

First she waddled all over the small island to be sure that it was large enough and to spare for the house. For this



Henry Ranger

THE FIRST PART OF A BEAVER'S HOUSE
LOOKS LIKE A HOLLOW PILE OF
STICKS WITH MUD OVER THEM.
PAGE 36.

house of hers was not to be a small one, but was to have a big living-room about five feet wide, and the walls would be about three feet thick on all sides, and when finished, the little lodge would look very much like the ice houses that the Esquimaux build. And so the island had to be large enough to keep the waters from washing into the little house and to give plenty of extra land for the house to grow on, for usually each summer a beaver's house is made larger.

The floor of the house was to be only a few inches above the water, as two hallways, or tunnels, were to be dug from the living-room, both opening into the Pond so far down under the water that Jack Frost could not freeze up the openings. The first thing that Mother and Father Beaver did was to begin to trample down the grass in a circle about six feet wide. Pat-pat, pat-pat they went

trotting around until all the grass was pounded down into the earth. The earth itself was very soft and soon the little floor began to look quite like a mud-pie, which was exactly what Mother and Father Beaver desired, for they were now going to bring plenty of little twigs and sticks to be pounded down into the top of this soft mud until the floor was hard and smooth.

Pat-pat they went stamping around it, and it surely does seem as if those trowel-like tails must have helped as they were dragged about over the mud, giving it a whack or two if Father or Mother Beaver grew excited over their work. Anyway, it was not long until the beavers had made just the floor they wanted, and then they began to build their house. For this, they had to gather sticks and good-sized logs from the birch thicket and the trees at the foot of the hill, for a house that is

to have walls three feet thick must have stout, strong timbers to keep them from caving in.

Slowly the circular walls grew above the floor, and they were so thickly made of stones and logs and earth that the largest, strongest bear that ever lived on Round-Top would not be able to force his sharp claws through them when they were finished. Over the outside of the house, Mr. and Mrs. Beaver plastered thick mud, in and around each log, scooping this mud out of the Pond and waddling with it, held in their little paws, as fast as they could until they reached the house. Only a little bit at one time could they carry, and it was surely a very slow way of getting the plastering done!

Inside the house, the living-room was beginning to look like a real living-room and Mrs. Beaver spent a great deal of her time in finishing the inside walls of this

room. Every end of a root or log that stuck out into the room was nibbled off with her big, yellow teeth, and mud was carried in and patted over the sticks until the walls were as smooth as walls ought to be. The house was nearly finished now, but Father Beaver decided that it needed a few more heavy logs before it was quite ready for its many coats of plastered mud, and he swam off to a small grove of trees at the foot of the hill.

To reach these trees, a large canal had been dug by all the beavers working together, so that they could float the heavy logs to their homes or to the dam. This was a much easier way to move the logs about than by rolling them over the ground and the canal was dug just as straight and true by these small, little paws as ever it could have been dug with really, truly shovels.

It was a lovely, late afternoon in Sep-

tember when Father Beaver started off to get the logs, his little brown head just showing above the water as he hurried along. He swam so fast, steering himself along with his tail, that a big pie-shaped trail in the water was left behind him and sent tiny little waves scurrying to the shores!

Father Beaver felt that he had to hurry every moment now; there was no time to be lost. Jack Frost had already touched the tops of some of the tallest trees with his paint brush and a yellow leaf floated on the Pond just where the canal branched off. Now this yellow leaf was just as plain for Father Beaver to read as your A-B-C's. It told him that winter was on the way and that if he and Mother Beaver did not wish to starve before spring, they had heaps and heaps of logs to cut and either strip off their bark or sink them at the bottom of the Pond.

It told him that Jack Frost would be ready almost any night, now, to freeze the plastered outer layers of mud as hard as stone over the outside of his house. In fact, if Father Beaver could have told you what that yellow leaf told him, he would have put it all in three words,—
“Hurry! Hurry! Hurry!”

And so on he swam as hard as ever a little beaver could go! No wonder there were small waves running along the shore as he went up the Pond! To the very end of the Big Canal he went, where an especially large birch tree grew. He planned to gnaw this down and then both he and Mother Beaver would cut the trunk into small logs and float them to the lodge. Each log would have to be stripped of its bark before he could put it on the house, and this bark was then to be stored away for food. It was a lovely tree about ten inches through its trunk, and Father

Beaver's eyes gleamed with delight as he thought of the quantities of delicious inner bark he would get from this one tree alone!

The top of the birch tree had been painted a soft yellow by Jack Frost, and as Father Beaver waddled out on the grassy bank, again he read its message,—
“Hurry, Father Beaver!” And Father Beaver hurried! Walking several times around the tree, he looked at it from all sides and then, mounting a small mound of earth near its roots, he began to cut it down. He stood up on his hind legs, bracing himself with his tail so that he would not fall over backward, and then, holding the trunk tightly with both paws, he opened his mouth wide and then, backed up by every muscle in his stout, little body, he made a bite in the bark of the tree! His big, yellow teeth struck far into the little birch, making a deep gash.

A second savage nip with the powerful teeth cut the gash both deeper and longer, and a third and fourth brought out a good-sized chip.

Father Beaver's lumbering had begun in earnest. Nothing would stop him now until he had gone round and round the tree, biting deeper and deeper until he had cut so large a groove that he could get his head in. Then, closer and closer to the heart of the tree he gnawed, working always *around* the tree so that it would not fall until he was ready to have it. Now most of the work on the little lodge had been done at night, but Father Beaver was in such a hurry that he felt he must work daytimes, too.

As the sun sank behind Round-Top, the little canals and the woods were lighted with the most beautiful colors! Pink and red and yellow, the rays of the setting sun flashed on the treetops and

the deep water in the canal. It was a very beautiful picture, indeed.

Mollie Rabbit came down the Hill and hopped out quite close to Father Beaver. She knew that he would not harm her and so she came very near the little canal. Mollie was very fond of the beavers, for they always scattered so many small twigs and buds on the ground when cutting down the trees that she was sure of many a delicious meal. As she hopped along, Mother Beaver waddled out of the canal onto the grassy banks. She had come to see what Father Beaver was doing, and finding that he was too busy even to notice her, she set to work, too, and in a very short time had cut down a slender aspen and had one of its very small logs in the canal ready to tow back to the lodge.

Father Beaver was still busily gnawing at his tree, stopping every little while

to pat it with his paws to see just how much more he must cut it before it fell. Then he would look up at its top to see if it were all right and then back he would fly to his work of chopping. How the chips flew and what big ones he could bite off! He wanted the tree to fall down along the bank where he could cut it up into short logs to float home. He was just gnawing a last chip out of its heart and Mother Beaver was just ready to slide down into the water to float her small log home when there was a sharp crack, a whish-swish-sh through the air that sent Mollie Rabbit flying madly back toward the Hill,—and down came the tree!

It had fallen just a moment sooner than either Father or Mother Beaver had expected! Father Beaver jumped backward so quickly that he fell over and rolled down a little bank right into the

birch thicket. He was not hurt at all but,—oh! what had happened to Mother Beaver! There she lay, close by the edge of the canal, pinned down to the ground by a large branch of the tree!

Father Beaver waddled over to her as quickly as he could. With his tiny little "hands" he caught hold of her and tried to pull her out from under the tree. This was something that even strong Father Beaver could not do! He could not just understand what was the matter with Mother Beaver! She did not move nor look up, so he patted her very gently with his paws; then he poked her several times, and then, all at once, he seemed to know just what to do!

If he left her under the branch until he could cut it up, a wolf or a fox would surely come and catch them both! No, indeed,—he could not take time for that! Waddling up and down the bank several

times, crawling over and under the fallen tree, he suddenly slid into the water and, turning about, began to dig as fast as ever he could, right under Mother Beaver.

The dirt fairly flew as he scooped it out. Some of it came right in his bright, little eyes, but he just ducked down under the water for a moment and washed it off and then began to dig once more. Two other beavers had come slowly up the canal ready to begin their work of getting bark for their own little house, and, seeing Father Beaver digging, they helped him, taking his place when his little paws seemed too tired to scoop out another pawful!

Now, whether Father Beaver told them of Mother Beaver's danger and asked their help or whether they merely thought that he was digging a new canal and that they ought to help, no one knows but Mother Nature. Only she knows how

animals talk and it is a secret that she intends to keep to herself. And so she will not tell us whether these little animals realized exactly what was to be done, or whether they knew that they must hurry if they would help Mother Beaver. All we do know is that they dug with all their might!

The sun had sunk down behind Round-Top long ago and the woods and the Pond and the Big Canal were all dark and shadowy. Up on the mountain, Mother Fox and her small cubs were just coming out of their cave-house to play on the hillside, and Bobby and Tommy Lynx were playing in the tangled thicket just outside their Hollow Tree House, while Mother Lynx had gone to get their supper. All the little rabbits were frisking about on the hillside and Mrs. Wood-chuck was sniffing the frosty air. It would soon be time for her to go to sleep

for the winter and she sniffled and snuffled now to see if she could learn just how soon old winter was coming. All the little animals were getting ready to frolic and hunt on the mountain after their day's rest, and Father Beaver knew that at any moment, some one of their many enemies might spring at them in the velvety darkness.

Slowly but surely the ground under Mother Beaver was scooped out, and very slowly her brown, furry body began to slide limply into the cool waters of the canal. Almost as the friendly water touched her and the cruel, heavy branch no longer weighed her down, her soft, brown eyes flew open and she gasped two or three times for air. Father Beaver was in the water, so that when she slid down into the canal he could help her, and the two other beavers were still busily digging at the bank. So busily had they

worked to free Mrs. Beaver that, for a moment, they had forgotten all about themselves, and, just as Mother Beaver slid down into the water, there came a slight click! in the woods behind them. It was a twig that had broken under the foot of some animal!

For just one instant the frightened little beavers sat upright on the bank and then they dived into the water just as a big, gray, furry animal leaped on to the very spot where they had been! It was Mother Lynx, and she gave a fierce, angry snarl as she missed these two fat beavers that she had been so sure she was going to have for Bobby's and Tommy's supper. And then, at that very instant, she saw Father and Mother Beaver so close to the bank that she gave a swift, downward stroke with one powerful paw, every claw out and ready to scratch and tear. But, again, she was just a scratch too late, for,

with a swift turn, Father Beaver dragged poor, lame Mother Beaver with him out into the middle of the canal and very slowly they went back to their lodge. Oh, how good the little bed of soft grass felt to Mother Beaver after she had managed to swim up the little tunnel into the living-room!

One hind paw was bruised and very lame, and every bone in her little body ached! But no bones had been broken and she knew that she would soon get well in the dear little house. Father Beaver brought in some very nice birch bark for her to chew on as she was lying on the soft grass bed, and altogether, she was a very thankful little beaver!

CHAPTER IV

FATHER BEAVER'S ADVENTURE

WITH Mother Beaver so lame that she could scarcely swim at all, poor Father Beaver knew that he had to work harder than ever to get their lodge finished and the food gathered for winter. So the next day he was hard at work again, barely taking time even to eat his meals. Jack Frost had crept all over the roof of the lodge the night before, freezing the mud into a layer as hard as concrete, and Father Beaver knew that he must get another layer of twigs and sticks and grass all over the house and cover it with a thick coating of mud besides, ready for Jack to freeze that night. So back and forth he swam, carrying big branches in his teeth

by throwing them partly over his shoulder and swimming with them to the lodge. Mrs. Beaver limped bravely out of the house and gnawed the bark off of most of the branches, while Father Beaver quickly put them on the house and began to scoop up mud and earth for the plastering.

Dear Mrs. Beaver helped as much as she could, but she could really do very little, and Father Beaver had just managed to put the last bit of mud on that night when Jack Frost arrived and began to freeze it harder and harder.

All the next day and the next, Father Beaver worked as hard as he knew how, and now Mrs. Beaver could help, too, for she could once more swim to the canal for sticks and branches. And Jack Frost worked just as hard as did Father Beaver, for he had all the other little lodges to freeze as well as Father Bea-

ver's. And besides, he had all of his painting to do. Every sumach tip along the mountainside had to be painted red, and all the little grapes on the long, swinging grape-vines had to have his icy breath blown on them to turn them into sweet, delicious fruit!

All the work of painting the trees and bushes had to be done, too, before he could do the work he liked best of all,—turn the little streams and ponds into ice! Oh, how he loved to catch the little drops of water and blow on them until they turned into frosty little drops of ice! But all of this other work must be done first, and so he dashed over the mountainside and raced over the meadows. He hurried so one night that he tripped and fell in the little ravine and spilled so much of his paint on the trees on the edge of the gully that he only had a very little left for the other side of the mountain!

But he did very good work everywhere else and Father and Mother Beaver's house was frozen so solidly that it seemed as if it were made of rock! The little mound-like house was now about five feet high and ten or eleven feet wide. And now the hardest task of all remained for Father and Mother Beaver,—to finish getting in their store of food, plenty to last all winter until gentle spring came with her sunshine and smiles to melt the hard little heart of Jack Frost! Sometimes it was very late before she could do this, and unless plenty of bark were safely stored away, Father and Mother Beaver might get hungry before the ice-cover melted from the Pond and let them out of their lodge.

All of the other beavers were busily at work getting their food, and every day some of them had to work on the dam to see that it was in good condition, not only

to hold the water back all winter, but to keep the canals full now so that they could easily float their quantities of food-logs and branches home. Father and Mother Beaver worked harder than any other little family in town. They were the oldest and wisest of the beaver colony, and so they knew better than anyone else how necessary it was to get food and plenty of it before winter came.

There were alders and aspens and poplars and birches to be cut down, and as only the soft, inner bark was what they liked best to eat, a big supply of trees would be necessary before they could feel certain that they had enough. And so, one afternoon, they started earnestly up the Pond to finish this work as speedily as possible. Side by side they swam up to the Big Canal. A log, cut by Father Beaver, rested with one end on the bank and right on that log was something that

made the beavers stop swimming instantly. It was a very large skunk!

Now the beavers were very much larger than Jack Skunk or any of his family, but well did they know of the weapon that Jack and each of his family possesses and from which all the forest-folk flee! And so Mr. and Mrs. Beaver decided that the best thing to do was to leave him absolutely alone. Giving the water a sharp slap with their tails, the beavers dived under the Pond and swam for a long, long way under the water, not coming to the surface until they were near the farther shore of the Pond where some very large trees grew and where several small canals had been dug through the woodland.

All was peaceful and quiet on this side of the Pond, and Father and Mother Beaver waddled out on the bank to look at the trees and to decide just what ones

to cut down. They preferred the other side of the Pond just now, for the trees on this side were so large that it would take a long time to cut them down. However, since Jack Skunk was over there, they must make the best they could of things and get to work.

A big muskrat, all furry and fuzzy, swam lazily down one of the canals, glancing carelessly at Father and Mother Beaver. The muskrat and the beaver families are very good friends and often-times, during the long, cold winter, a tired muskrat will creep into one of the underground tunnels of a beaver-house and go to sleep there. And the beavers are very glad to let him stay.

Seeing that Mr. Muskrat was just idly swimming around, the beavers knew that no enemy was near and they began work at once. The leaves on the trees had been turned into such beautiful colors that

each tree looked like a huge, stained-glass window through which the squirrels and chipmunks hopped in and out.

Mother Gray-Squirrel had trained all of her children to race fearlessly through the trees by this time, and they darted up and down the trees and leaped from limb to limb so rapidly that poor Mrs. Beaver watched them in terror! Surely they would fall and kill themselves! But not a mishap occurred and soon they all dashed merrily away to some nut trees up on the hill.

Father and Mother Beaver were really very glad when the squirrels went away. They chattered so to each other, and quarreled with the chipmunks, and scolded the red squirrels until it quite made the poor beavers' ears ache!

By working as rapidly as they knew how, it was not long before both Father

and Mother Beaver had cut down a good-sized tree. Not a single tooth-stroke had been wasted. Each one bit into the tree at just the right angle, and no wood-chopper with a sharp axe could have made a better job of it than did these little animals with only their sharp teeth to work with.

After the trees were down, each beaver began to cut off all the branches, and these were dragged to the water and floated down the Pond to the deep water right in front of their lodge. Arriving over this spot, the beavers dived down under the water and fastened the branches to the bottom of the Pond by heaping mud and small stones on them. Soon they had such a pile that they could stick the fresh branches into it and hold them down by interlacing them with the sticks already there. Some of the larger branches were held in place by sticking

them firmly into the muddy bottom of the Pond.

By the time that night had come, all of the branches from the two trees had been brought down from the woods, and Father and Mother Beaver were now ready to cut up the trees themselves into logs to float to the lodge. Both Father and Mother Beaver were very tired, especially Mother Beaver, who still felt a twinge or two in her hurt foot if she worked for a long time.

So when they had cut the trees up into small logs, they asked some of the other beavers to help roll the heaviest pieces to the water. Father Beaver had been such a good lumberman that the tree had fallen close to the water, but the large pieces cut off near the tree-stump had to be pushed and rolled to the canal. Their friends were glad to help, and pushing with small forepaws and shoulders, wad-

dling along on their awkward, short back legs, they worked hard to get the logs over the bumps and tufts of grass and old tree-roots that were in the way.

Father Beaver was very strong and he wanted to roll all of *his* logs by himself, letting the other beavers help Mother Beaver; and in this way, poor Father Beaver met with a very serious adventure and one that nearly cost him his life. It was just the right kind of a night for a beaver to work. The beautiful, fall day had turned into a rainy night and this was the sort of weather that all beavers love. The steady rain was making the water rise in the Pond and canals, and this pleased them all very much.

Just beside the stump where Father Beaver was working was a little hollow, and into this had fallen a big limb that had broken off from the tree as it fell. Father Beaver had gone back for the last

piece of log when he saw this branch, and thinking of the many tender bits of bark it would give, he picked it up by its heaviest end, and rising on his hind legs the better to drag the branch along, he began to waddle with it to the water. He had to lean back so far to keep the branch out of his way that, if it had not been for his tail, he might have fallen over backwards. Even with the help of this stiff prop, he had hard work to get along. Step by step, however, he came nearer and nearer to the water. Then, when only a little way from the bank, his left hind-foot broke through the thin roof of a tunnel made by a muskrat, he slipped with a sharp wrench of his foot, lost his balance and rolled down a small hill, the branch falling on top of him.

And there he lay, with such a pain in the poor little hind-foot that he thought he would never be able to walk again nor

ever get back to the dear, safe lodge-house. Mother Beaver and the others were working as busily as they could, getting the logs into the water and swimming with them to the lodges, while the rain splashed softly down on their little brown noses as they stuck out of the water.

Only one little beaver was left at work on the bank at the time that Father Beaver fell, and he was so busy that he did not know that anything had occurred at all.

Now, as it happened, this was the very kind of a night that Mrs. Fox liked, too. The noise of the rain kept many little animals from hearing her, if, by chance, her paws broke a twig or sent a small stone rolling down a hill. She had heard the beavers working as they cut down the trees that day, and well did she know that they would be back to finish their work

that night. When the heavy, pouring rain came she was sure that it would help her get a nice, fat beaver for supper.

Now the beavers were far too wise not to be on the lookout for just such prowlers as Mrs. Fox. But in spite of all their watchfulness, Mrs. Fox had managed to get very close to them in the darkness. The rain screened her so that she felt perfectly sure that she was going to be able to get a most delicious supper. The beavers, however, went in and out of the water so much and so quickly that, as yet, she had not dared venture a spring. Not until she spied Father Beaver waddling along with the branch, did she think that the time had come for her supper.

Cautiously she crept along behind him, hesitating to leap on him with the branch spreading out over his shoulder, for fear it might prevent her grabbing him. And then, to her amazement, he fell over and

rolled down hill, and then,—she didn't see him there at all! Instead, she saw what she *supposed* was Father Beaver right at the edge of the bank.

How he got there so quickly she could not tell. What Mrs. Fox did not know was that another beaver beside Father Beaver was still at work. So, thinking that in some manner which the rain had kept her from seeing, he had reached the edge of the bank, and fearing that at any moment he would start swimming for home, Mrs. Fox leaped right over the very spot where Father Beaver *was* lying! The other beaver did not see her coming, however, but calmly slipped into the water just in time to escape her!

How poor Father Beaver trembled as he saw his deadly enemy leaping from the little hill just above him!

Then he watched her with frightened, staring eyes, expecting every moment to

have her turn and catch him. But the friendly little branch had covered him so well that she could not see him, and the wind and rain were helping to hide his scent. So, as she passed by, Father Beaver very cautiously and painfully crept out from under the branch, and although his sprained back-leg hurt him dreadfully, he waddled as softly and as fast as he could go toward the upper part of the canal.

Father Beaver was very brave, as all beavers are when danger faces them, but even he thought that he would never be able to reach the water before Mrs. Fox would see him! And now her quick ears caught a slight sound as he hobbled and limped as rapidly as he could toward the canal. The rain poured down harder than ever, as if to keep Mrs. Fox from knowing where he was, and the wind blew the scent of him away up the canal, but

Mrs. Fox was not to be fooled! With quick bounds she leaped along the bank! Father Beaver heard her coming! Could he reach the friendly water? Oh, if only his foot did not pain so terribly, and if only he did not have quite so far to go, and oh, if only a little beaver could go faster when on land!

Mrs. Fox stopped once more to listen and then,—she saw him! Two bounds and her sharp teeth clicked savagely together on Father Beaver's back just as he gave one last, frantic waddle that carried him into the canal! Fortunately for Father Beaver, Mrs. Fox had only caught him by the fur. For just a moment those wicked teeth held him and then, as he struggled, the hair pulled through her teeth and then down he went with a final wrench that tore out a big piece of his fur! It hurt him,—hurt him terribly, but what did he care for a little thing like

that? He was *safe*,—or would be as soon as he could manage to get to the little lodge-house!

Slowly and painfully he pushed through the water, coming at last to his underground doorway. Mother Beaver was already inside the living-room and she watched poor Father Beaver very anxiously as he hobbled and limped across the room to a grassy bed along the wall. The cold water had helped the swelling of his hurt hind-foot and the pain was very much less. Mother Beaver brought him some tender buds and twigs to chew on as he told her of his very narrow escape. And, for fear that Mrs. Fox might still be hunting near the canal, Father and Mother Beaver decided to stay at home that night and take a good rest.

CHAPTER V.

NEW CITIZENS IN BEAVER-TOWN

WHEN morning came, Father Beaver's foot was very much better, and after he had taken several swims in the cold water, it felt very, **VERY** much better, so much better, in fact, that he determined to try to use it again that day. For the keen morning wind that blew down from old Round-Top, and out across the Pond, brought him some very important news—old Winter would soon reach Round-Top. The wind was tearing and ripping the leaves off the trees and piling them up in brilliant gold and yellow heaps. Some of them blew gaily across the Beaver-Pond and some even fluttered on top of the lodge as if they would be glad to

get inside the cosy house. All this told of the coming of winter very plainly to Father Beaver.

The storehouse down at the bottom of the Pond was almost full. Another day or two of work and he felt sure that he would have plenty of food. So very bravely, he started with Mrs. Beaver to swim up to the Big Canal where there were smaller trees to get. Neither Jack Skunk nor Mrs. Fox was to be seen, and although his foot hurt him very much at times, Father Beaver worked just as hard as if nothing were the matter with him. When the pain became too hard to bear, he would plunge into the icy, cold water and paddle around for a while, which was just the best medicine in the world for his leg.

All that day and night, every beaver in the little town worked very hard, for they knew just as well as did Father

Beaver that there was not a moment to be lost. Bark was stripped from the logs and the logs themselves thrown out into the Pond to be floated down to the dam to help in making it strong enough to last all winter. If the dam broke, all the water in the Beaver-Pond would pour out, and their front doors would be wide open for all the wolves and foxes and otters to walk right in! Oh, the dam was very important, and mud and stones and logs and then more mud and stones and logs were piled on its inner surface and across its top, until it was just as firm as a stone wall.

All the leaves were gone from the trees by the time this work was done, and the North Wind tore and raced wildly over the old Hill, piling the leaves high around the roots of the Hollow Spruce where Mollie Rabbit lived, and heaping them up over Mrs. Groundhog's burrow to keep

her warm as she slept all winter. Every night Jack Frost came to freeze up a little bit of water here or nip a bush there that still was so foolish as to have its sap up in its branches.

All the big trees and bushes and finally even the smallest shrubs sent their sap way down in their roots to stay until spring, and then, one night, Jack Frost came merrily over the Hill, riding on the back of the North Wind. Together they chased the clouds pell-mell across the sky and upset them until the little snowflakes came tumbling down. How they blew and flew around into every crack and corner of the dear old Hill! Mother Lynx's cave was all covered up and so was Grandfather Black-Bear's den 'way up on top of the mountain!

Over the Beaver-Pond, Jack Frost rode gaily while the North Wind grew colder and colder. Down Jack would

swoop, touching the Pond with his icy wand, and wherever he struck, long trails of ice followed after. Again and again, over and back and up and down he scampered. Oh, but he was happy, for this was just the work he liked best of all. He tumbled the snowflakes down into the water and locked them in with long bars of ice! Up the little ravine he dashed, freezing the edges of the tumbling, little stream, turning its spray into frozen foam. He was the merriest, busiest little fellow on all Round-Top, and when Father Beaver swam out of his front door the next morning, behold!—the Pond was securely shut in with a firm, white roof, under which he and all the other beavers could safely romp and play.

It was like a large, white tent and Father and Mother Beaver were very happy to see it, and so were all the other beavers in the little town; and they all came out

and frolicked around in the water and swam and dived and chewed pieces of bark from their storerooms and had a wonderful time. This was vacation-time now, with nothing to do but lie on the soft, grassy beds and chew the delicious bark from the logs, tossing the logs out again into the Pond where they would float around until needed next spring to repair the dam.

All winter they rested and played and ate bark, and every little beaver had put in such a good supply of food that there was still plenty left when Spring came back to Round-Top, and opened all the doors on the mountain that Jack Frost had locked with his icy bolts and bars. Like Jack, she flew merrily over the mountain, only *she* came with the warm, South Wind, and where Jack had used ice and snow, she used warm rains and sunny skies. Jack's helpers were cold and ice

and sleet and snow, but her gay little soldiers were the sunbeams and the South Wind and the clear, blue sky and the flowers.

And when Long Pond once more rippled and twinkled in the warm spring days, each little beaver lodge held such a wonderful secret that the Beaver-Pond told it to the little stream and he carried it down to Long Pond and then the wind learned it,—how, no one knows. But learn it he did and soon all the animals on Round-Top knew that the prettiest, fluffiest little babies on the Hill were to be found in the lodges of the beavers!

Some little houses held six babies and some only three. Father and Mother Beaver thought their four babies were the nicest little family in all the Beaver-Town and the wisest, smartest children as well. And perhaps they were, or, maybe it was just the very good care

they had that made them grow so rapidly. And so it was not long before they were sitting up in the warm, comfortable living-room gnawing little twigs just as they saw Father and Mother Beaver doing! Such fuzzy, pretty little babies as they were, with their silky fur, their small, round heads and their bright twinkling eyes. And their very small paws looked like little pink hands as they carefully held their birch twigs.

Mother and Father Beaver were both very proud of them and Father Beaver helped just the best he knew how to take care of them. He stayed very closely at home and helped play with them and care for them as lovingly as any furry father possibly could. Oh, what fun they had romping around the big living-room,—for the little baby beavers, now about the size of kittens, were as full of play as a lot of little puppies. They would run

down the tunnels and look out into the deep water of the Pond, only to scamper back again in fear of the water that tried to look its best and friendliest for them.

They watched Father and Mother Beaver with eager, twinkling eyes as they waddled down the tunnels for a swim near the front door. But they had no desire to try it for themselves. And then, one day when the sun was so hot that the water was as warm as toast, Father and Mother Beaver took them down the tunnels and out into the warm, friendly waters. Oh, how scared they were! Baby Brother just whimpered and cried with fright, while Big Sister trembled and shook so that she did not dare go out any farther than just the very doorstep of the little house! First, she put out one little paw and then another, only to draw them back in fright!

The two other children, however,

learned to swim quite well, and Father and Mother Beaver were *so* pleased with them, especially as they were the first children in all the little town to go for a swim. That night, when all was dark and cool, Mother Beaver took them out into the Pond again, and this time even Baby Brother forgot his fear and swam quite a little way in the velvety-looking water where the stars shone like golden balls. Then Mother Beaver took them back and put them to bed, and she and Father Beaver went swimming off for logs to use in repairing the dam and to keep up the stock of food. With four babies now to eat the delicious inner bark, they must work harder than ever to keep their store-house filled.

Mother Beaver was very well satisfied with the way her babies were learning to swim, and she determined to take them up on their little island the next day if pos-

sible. Father Beaver would soon be going away for the long vacation that he meant to take while the babies were so very little. The other fathers of Beaver-Town had already gone. The mothers seemed to be glad to be left alone with the children for a while, and Mother Beaver was very anxious to teach them as much as possible while Father Beaver was there to help her protect them.

The next morning was a perfect beaver-day. It was raining hard. So, in their little rain-proof coats, Mother Beaver led them down the tunnel and into the Pond. They did not whimper and cry this time, but splashed into the water and kicked it about and dived around very much as if they were grown-up beavers. All this Mother Beaver saw with great delight and instead of taking them only to their own little island, she swam slowly with them to the shore of the

Pond. Father Beaver swam beside them, watching carefully to see that none grew so tired that it would try to stop swimming. At last they reached the shore, and what a beautiful place it was! The rain came down so hard that Mother Beaver felt sure that no enemy would be prowling about, and she and Father Beaver and the four little baby beavers just had the most delightful time playing and frolicking around!

They pushed each other over in the deep midsummer grass; they sat up on their funny little back-legs, while their funnier little tails tried to look like Father and Mother Beaver's long, flat ones. Into the water they dived, pushing each other down the soft, slippery bank and having such a good time that Mother Beaver did not like to end the pretty play by taking them home. But Father Beaver was going away that very night



HAVING SUCH A GOOD TIME THAT MOTHER
BEAVER DID NOT LIKE TO TAKE THEM
HOME. PAGE 82.

on his long vacation, and Mother Beaver felt that the safest place for the babies was at home and in bed. So down they all slid into the water and slowly they paddled home.

Baby Brother was so tired from his play that he could hardly make his little back-feet go at all! But, at last, they reached the tunnel of the little house and there they had another lesson. Mr. and Mrs. Beaver taught them how to shake themselves in the tunnel so as not to carry wet fur up into the warm, dry living-room. And then they were given a lesson in combing their fur with both their front and hind paws until it was as dry and silky as a little beaver's fur ought to be. Father and Mother Beaver sat right up in front of them and showed them how, and each little beaver did exactly as he was told. Then they went to bed and had their supper of poplar-bark in bed.

Baby Brother was too tired to eat his supper and he went sound asleep with the little poplar-twigs held tightly between his teeth. And that night, Father Beaver started away on his vacation to wander far up the canals and through the marshes and to have delightful swims in Long Pond. And all the mother-beavers stayed at home and taught their children how to gnaw off the twigs from trees and how to help repair the dam. It was a lovely, happy summer, full of lessons and play and work, and by the time the father-beavers came home, all the children in the town had grown so much and had learned so much that they were all ready to help with the hard work of getting ready for winter.

CHAPTER VI

LITTLE BROTHER MEETS SOME ENEMIES

IT was late summer once more and now the comfortable, old lodge-house had to be made larger to provide beds and room for the family of six that would live there that winter. The dam was being made higher and longer and this forced the water to rise until it would have covered the floors of all the living-rooms in all the beaver-houses, if they had not known of a very simple way to prevent this. They just tore down quantities of the twigs and stones and moss and grass from the ceilings and walls of the living-rooms, and this was all packed down into the floor. This not only raised the ceilings to their proper height, but made the rooms longer

and wider as well. Even Baby Brother helped by tramping back and forth over the floor. He thought it great fun to give it loud whacks with his little tail, as this always made his mother and sisters jump with fright!

It was a very funny sight to see them all waddling and tramping around, but, inch by inch, the floor was raised above the Pond. And now, more moss and stones and logs must be put on the outside of the house, and all the little beavers worked very hard, carrying mud held tightly under their chins in their baby paws. The big logs and branches were brought to the lodge by Father and Mother Beaver, but all the children went along to bring home the smaller twigs to bury in the food-storehouse. Every little beaver in the town was working just as hard as he knew how, and late every afternoon the Pond was just filled with

bobbing, brown heads as the little beavers went busily up and down between the woodland and their lodges.

The dam was being made as tight and strong as possible to hold back the very large quantity of water that the friendly stream was pouring into it every day, and all the logs that had been stripped of their bark during the winter were being plastered into the dam. Big Sister and Little Sister were having lessons in learning how to make the walls of the living-room smooth and even. Everyone was busy and very happy.

The little lodge was kept very neat and clean. No nibbled sticks were allowed to remain scattered about, but each little beaver was trained to carry his own share of twigs and branches out through the tunnels to be thrown into the Pond to be used again in some other way. And so, at bedtime, the floor was dry and clean

and the beds very attractive with their piles of dry grass and soft, shredded cedar wood.

Mother Beaver was a very good house-keeper, indeed, and the little lodge looked very clean and restful after the hard work of being lumbermen, and masons, and builders of dams and houses, and civil engineers, and canal diggers, and gatherers of food sufficient for six hungry beavers for all winter! And when sleepy-time came and the whole family was gathered in the room, now so big that it held them all without crowding, there were delightful playtimes and frolics.

Mr. and Mrs. Beaver sometimes joined in the fun, but usually they were so tired that they just went right to bed directly after supper! The children had not worked as hard as had their father and mother and they were ready for a play. They would nudge and poke one another

off the beds, grab hold of each other's supper-sticks and pull them away, bite one another's ears or, maybe, a foot as it poked out of the bed, and then they would end up by chasing each other down one tunnel, out into the Pond and back into the lodge by the other hallway. Oh, it was great fun, and such a splashing as there was and such shaking of wet coats in the hallways and such wet coats as *sometimes* crept into bed! It made Mrs. Beaver quite nervous and worried when they raced out into the Pond. Their deadliest enemy,—an otter,—might, by chance, come to the Pond and catch them! Or Mother Lynx might be hiding right beside the house and grab them with one swift stroke of her powerful paws.

Well did Mother Beaver know what would happen *then!* There would be no little beaver left when Mother Lynx finished with him! All these deadly enemies

Mother Beaver had to think of. She had taught her children as much as she could about them. They knew the scent of all their worst enemies, even of Grandfather Black-Bear who had prowled one day through the marsh looking for berries. And they knew the wind's rules and the Pond's secrets. They had learned of all the kindly forest-people,—Mollie Rabbit and the squirrels and Mrs. Woodchuck. All this they had learned besides their lessons in building and lumbering, and Mother Beaver felt that they were very talented and wise children. One night, Big Sister had even gone to Long Pond with Father Beaver for some delicious lily roots!

In fact, the children were fast getting very well able to take good care of themselves, and Mother Beaver knew that by another summer they would know as much as she did herself; but, nevertheless,

all this splashing and dashing and racing around when they should have been in bed made her feel very anxious indeed! And, one night, she just determined to get those little beavers all in from the Pond and make them go to bed as little beavers ought to do! Then, after their rest, they would be ready to go out in the soft darkness and help her and Father Beaver work.

Now, Little Brother had grown to be the boldest of all the little beaver-children and this time, when Big Sister chased him down through one tunnel, he did not run back through the other one, but swam far out into the Pond. And when Mother Beaver swam out and made Big Sister come in and go to bed, she did not see Little Brother at all! Little Brother splashed around for a little while by himself, then he turned to go back to the little house. But what, oh, what was this huge

thing that he saw slowly swimming close to the little lodge-house? Something that finally pulled itself up on the narrow strip of land around the house!

One of the first laws that every little forest-baby has to learn is:—"When you see anything new that you cannot understand, keep away! Ignorance is danger!" What this awful animal was, Little Brother did not know. But there it was, close by his house, and it could swim as well as he could and it would surely catch him if he tried to get home. There was only one thing to do:—warn the town of this danger and fly as fast as ever he could go to one of the many burrows that now filled the banks. With so many new little beavers in the village, the old beavers had decided that they needed plenty of burrows, and the banks of the Pond held great numbers of them.

Giving the water as loud a whack as he

knew how to do with his small tail, Little Brother dived down for the nearest burrow. Now, if Little Brother had only been a little older, he would not have chosen this burrow at all, for it was an old one that Mrs. Fox had once dug into and its farthest end was all torn open, the old beavers not having discovered what had happened to it so as to repair it.

An older and wiser beaver could have told by the volume of fresh air pouring down the tunnel that something was wrong with it, and possibly their very keen noses might even have caught the smell that would have spelled F-O-X. But Little Brother was too young and too frightened to think of these things. He was so thankful to escape this unknown enemy waiting for him in the Pond, that he fairly ran along the burrow to where he supposed he would find the nice, airy room where he could safely

hide. But instead of the safe room underneath an old tree, there he was right out in the air with nothing around him but some old, gray roots.

And then, oh, what awful thing was this, crouching just ready to spring on him, with eyes that gleamed like two live coals! It was Mrs. Lynx who just happened to see Little Brother as he came out of the tunnel! But even as she sprang with every cruel claw out just ready to clutch poor Little Brother, he turned and got back into the tunnel just out of the way! What awful adventures he was having this night!

He did not dare go back into the Pond, for he was sure that terrible enemy was waiting for him right by his own dear front door. And if he stayed here in this broken old burrow, a fox or a wolf might come! Right in the middle of the tunnel he cowered in fear. And it was a very

fortunate thing for him that plenty of air did get down into the burrow, for if it had not, poor Little Brother might have smothered in the stuffy place. Beavers do not require quite as much air as do the rest of the forest-people, which explains why they can stay so long and swim so far under water. But even they will drown or smother after a while, either in the water or in an airless burrow, and so it was a very good thing for Little Brother that the old North Wind was blowing hard that night as he tore right down into the tunnel.

But, oh, how cold he was! And how he missed his soft, grassy bed, and how scared he was, and how hungry,—oh, how hungry! For Little Brother had played so very hard that he hadn't taken even one chew of his delicious birch-stick supper. And his legs ached as he crouched all cramped up in the narrow tunnel. Oh,

if only his soft, warm, furry mother were there, or even Big Sister so that he could cuddle up beside her! At last, he could not stand it another instant and he cried and whimpered as hard as he knew how.

Now, this was a very dangerous thing to do, for if some of his digging-enemies, like Mrs. Fox or Grandfather Black-Bear, had heard him, it would have been the end of Little Brother. A little animal *did* hear him and crept to the very mouth of the burrow, but it was only a little rabbit and she very soon hopped away. Then it seemed lonelier than ever and colder, too, and Little Brother cried harder than he did before.

Whether Mother Beaver heard him or whether she missed him and just went hunting for him, no one can tell, but just when he was crying the hardest, she came right across the Pond to the entrance of the burrow. Little Brother was the very

happiest beaver-baby in the whole Pond as he swam home close beside Mother Beaver. He looked in fear at his little house for there, right on a big log that stuck out of the water, was that other enemy of which he had been so afraid. But Mrs. Beaver did not seem to mind it at all, but just dived calmly down to her own front door with Little Brother following after as quickly as he knew how. And if he had only known it, the dreadful enemy was not an enemy at all, but just a very, very, very large Grandfather Turtle from Long Pond that had lost his way and gotten into the Beaver-Pond by mistake.

CHAPTER VII

MR. OTTER GOES SLIDING

IT was not long before the icy roof again covered the Beaver-Pond. Every house was built as snug and secure as busy little hands could make them. Jack Frost had frozen the layers of mud until each little lodge seemed made of stone. Had Jack not done this, Grandfather Black-Bear would soon have torn them apart with his ripping, tearing claws, and he and the wolves would have eaten the beavers one by one until the whole little town would have been gone. But Grandfather Black-Bear could not get even one claw into the firm roofs that the busy little paws had made, and so the beavers felt very cosy and happy as the big ice-tent

was fastened securely down around the Pond.

Each storehouse was filled full of food, and now the young beavers had nothing to do but play and eat and grow fat and strong and big. At first, Big Sister and Little Brother and the other beaver children seemed to do nothing at all but just get fatter and fatter until they looked like round, furry balls. But soon they began to lengthen out and so rapidly did they seem to stretch out that they began to look almost thin. Their tails grew amazingly and so did their yellow front teeth.

Little Brother's teeth grew the most rapidly of all and they were a very deep orange color. His mother thought he was a very handsome little beaver-boy indeed! He was no longer content to chew the little twigs and branches, but took the largest sticks he could find in the store-

house and gnawed away at them until the muscles in his neck and shoulders grew strong and powerful.

He would drag a short, thick log into the house and then he would show his brother and sisters how he could cut it up. This was one of his favorite games. Around the whole log, his teeth-chisels would cut a wide groove, making the groove wider as he got deeper into the wood, until the little log would look very much like an hour glass and it only needed one last bite to snap it apart. Then there would be two logs instead of one, with nicely-pointed ends like a very large, sharpened lead pencil.

Now if this had been a growing tree in the woodland, he would have been too wise to have taken those last nips, for he would have known that the weight of the tree would make it crash down and *might* and, very probably, *would* have crashed

his little head along with it! But with the logs in the lodge, he had to make a complete job of it and so he bit it clear through.

Big and Little Sister and Big Brother soon learned to do this, too, and they practised at it so earnestly that their neck muscles grew just as strong as Little Brother's, and Mother Beaver could see very plainly that, when summer came, she and Father Beaver would have plenty of help in all the hard work they must do.

When the little beavers tired of this play, they would swim out into the Pond, where they could safely splash and dive and race around in play with all the other little beavers. There were so many of these children playing in the water that Father Beaver looked quite worried, for he realized that the little town was going to grow so rapidly that the dam must be made very much higher and longer, so

that many trees could be reached, as quantities would be needed for food and for the dam.

He was lying on his grass-bed one day, chewing some especially fine bark, and all the little beavers were out at play in the Pond, when a most peculiar sound reached his ears. He leaped out of bed and swam quickly into the Pond where the frightened little beavers were listening to this same sound. In a moment, they all swam for home as fast as they could go.

But Father Beaver remained in the Pond, swimming slowly and carefully around. Utter silence enclosed the whole place and then, suddenly, there came a sharp thump on the ice, followed by a long swish-wsh-sh clear to the middle of the Pond, and then the sound of claws scratching over the ice as some animal walked back to the shore.

Perfectly sure that the animal, whatever it was, could not get down through the very thick icy roof to harm him, Father Beaver swam cautiously up and down and across the Pond. Thump!—thump! came the noise again and then the long swish—wshsh—sh! This was too much for Father Beaver to stand! As the oldest and wisest beaver in all the little town, he just felt that he *must* find out what was the cause of all this and determine, if possible, if it meant any harm to the little Beaver-Town.

So off he swam to the burrow that he and Mother Beaver had made so long ago in the bank, and through it he waddled until he came to one of the little air-holes underneath the old beech-tree. Jack Frost and King Winter and the little snowflakes had frozen over and covered up most of the openings, but there was one on the south side of the tree that was

just as he and Mother Beaver had left it. In fact, it was even wider than they had first made it, for the rain had crumbled the soft earth around its edges and Father Beaver could poke his whole head through the opening.

Cautiously and very slowly, oh, *very* cautiously and slowly, his little nose came through the mouth of the tunnel, soon followed by his sleek brown head with its gleaming, bright eyes. It was the close of a winter's day and Father Beaver hardly knew the Pond or the little woodland at the bottom of old Round-Top. There were no leaves on the trees and everywhere and over everything was a glistening, gleaming white, puffy blanket of snow.

All the canals were filled in so deeply that Father Beaver could not have told where they were at all. Ice and snow completely covered the dam until it was

nowhere to be seen. The brown stumps of the trees that he and Mother Beaver had left there in the fall were all gone, and in their places were funny, white mounds of snow and ice. Even the branches of the trees did not look as Father Beaver had always seen them, for many of them were covered with pieces of this same white blanket. Father Beaver's bright eyes stared and stared in wonder. He even forgot what he had come to the burrow for!

The sun was just setting behind the old Hill (that did not look like *his* hill at all!) and it shot long streaks of red and pink and yellow light out across the snow until it, too, looked red and pink and yellow. Father Beaver stared in wonder, and then his eye caught sight of something near by that quickly made him lose interest in the queer way that the Pond and woods appeared!

Near the foot of the Hill was a very high mound of snow that had blown and drifted in near the spot where the Big Canal was. And down this hill came his deadliest enemy,—the otter! Lying flat on his fur stomach, with his fore-feet doubled back under him, the otter had given a stout push with his hind-legs and, head foremost, he was sliding down the snowy, icy mound!

Thump! he struck the ice of the Pond! Swish-wshsh—he went gliding half-way across it. Then, straightening out his front feet, he got awkwardly up on his four short legs and scrambled and slipped back to the snowy mound. Digging in his sharp nails he climbed up to the top and, without pausing for breath, down he shot again! Oh, but he was having the best time that an otter ever can have! For otters would rather slide than eat! And when they cannot find ice and snow



THE OTTER WAS SLIDING DOWN THE
SNOWY, ICY MOUND. PAGE 106.

to slide on, they will make a mud-slide on the soft stream-banks and coast down until they make a deep trough in the mud!

Oh, but Mr. Otter was having a good time and, as he scrambled and climbed around, he looked so playful and so happy that it was very hard to believe that he would just be tickled to pieces if he could catch and eat up dear old Father Beaver. And poor Father Beaver was dreadfully, most dreadfully worried at seeing this enemy here! When he and Mrs. Beaver had first settled at the foot of the Hill, he had been quite sure that an otter lived over in Long Pond, and he and Mrs. Beaver and all the other beavers had always been on the lookout for him.

Now, Father Beaver had been right in thinking that an otter lived in Long Pond, for he did. What Father Beaver could not know, of course, was that this otter had furnished a fine meal for

Mother Lynx. As time passed and no otter came to trouble the little colony, Father Beaver felt that he had been mistaken and that these cruel enemies did not live in this part of the country.

And now, here was one sliding right over the icy roof of the Beaver-Town! And if a thaw should come, or the otter managed in some way to get down under the ice, poor Father Beaver shuddered to think what would happen to the little children of Beaver-Town! For Mr. Otter was just as much at home in the water as was Father Beaver. Moreover, he was a foot larger than Father Beaver and was known to be a fierce, cruel fighter!

Oh, how scared Mr. Beaver was as he thought of what might happen to his little town! If only this cruel enemy would go away! But Father Beaver was sure that he would manage to stay around now all winter, and when spring came,

he would just gobble them up one by one!

Father Beaver was just about to crawl hopelessly back down the burrow and spread the sad news to the fathers and mothers in the town, when he saw something that froze him in his place with fear and curiosity and terror all combined. A big hemlock tree hung its powerful, long arms out high above the snowy mound and, just as Mr. Otter climbed again to the top for another delightful slide, a gray shape on the branch of the tree gathered itself together for a powerful spring. Down it came, with ripping, tearing claws, right on the back of the otter and that was the end of the otter's sliding, for Mrs. Lynx was having him for supper! And Father Beaver very thankfully crawled down the burrow and went home to bed!

CHAPTER VIII

THE FOREST FIRE

WHEN spring came once more to the Beaver-Town, Mr. and Mrs. Beaver had five more babies to care for, and the little house seemed filled to overflowing with five small babies, four half-grown children and Father and Mother Beaver. And, as every little lodge in the town was just about as well-filled, it was very evident that there would be plenty of work to do *that* summer! For now the elder brothers and sisters had to work just as hard as their fathers and mothers, and they had to help care for the babies, besides.

Again, the living-room had to be enlarged and the Pond had to be deepened,

and the floor raised above the water, and the ceiling torn out and raised higher, and there was the outside to be rebuilt again! And just twice as much food must be gathered for this winter's food-closet as was needed last year. Big Brother and Little Brother didn't mind all the work very much, however, as they were large enough now to go on the summer trip with Father Beaver and all the other fathers and half-grown boys. And they had a fine time hunting for delicious lily roots in Long Pond and in swimming up and down the fine, big Pond and sleeping in small burrows along its banks.

Of course, Bobby Lynx, who was quite grown up by this time, knew all about these beavers away from home on this trip, and many a foolish, little beaver was caught that thought he did not have to obey the most important of all beaver-rules:—"Always stay near enough to

water to be able to reach it before an enemy can reach *you!*" Bobby Lynx found these foolish beavers, and so did several members of the very numerous fox-family.

But Big Brother and Little Brother, although they had some very narrow escapes and very thrilling adventures, met with no serious accident, and when they finally came home with Father Beaver at the end of their vacation, they had grown so big and strong and had such very large, yellow teeth and such long, scaly tails that Mother Beaver hardly knew them!

Big Sister and Little Sister had been growing, too. In fact, they were as large as their brothers, and Father and Mother Beaver thought they were the finest and handsomest children in all the little village. And now, the whole family went swimming and splashing about the Pond

on the lovely summer nights. The yellow lily roots, of which they were so very fond, had begun to grow in the Beaver-Pond, and delicious water-grasses were to be had in abundance. There was no hurry about rebuilding their lodges, for winter was a long way off, and so they had plenty of time for swims in the warm, friendly waters.

So many new canals had been dug and so many, many trees cut down, that Mr. and Mrs. Beaver scarcely knew the place any more. The little army of trees that had once threatened to crowd Long Pond out of their way, were all gone and the Beaver-Pond was growing so long and wide, now, that it began to look like Long Pond's little sister. The dam was so long and so wide that some little seeds, which the wind had carried there, decided to grow and live on the dam, and so many of them were there that the dam was just

a mass of pretty green plants and bushes all summer.

The beavers went to and from the new lumbering places without much fear. The wolves that lived on the other side of the mountain found so much to eat in these warm, summer days, that they grew lazy and less fierce and did not bother to come down near Long Pond all that summer. Grandmother and Grandfather Black-Bear found so many delicious berries and roots on the mountainside, that they grew sleek and fat and lazy, too, and *they* did not come near the Beaver-Pond, either. And the Hill was so filled with rabbits and grouse and partridges that even the prowling, sly foxes were not tempted to come down to the Pond at all.

The beavers were hard at work now cutting down trees. Everywhere through the woodlands could be heard the swish

—crack,—swish—crack! of falling trees, and the Beaver-Pond was filled with beavers pushing food-logs to their store-houses. The young beavers worked as hard as the old ones and there was not a lazy, shiftless beaver in the colony! Father Beaver set such a good example, that any beaver would have been ashamed not to work as hard as he knew how.

Of course,—there were accidents. Some of the trees fell on a few of the little beavers, and some of them wandered away and got lost and didn't come back any more, and there were some fierce fights. But, for all that, things went along very well and the little town was growing so rapidly that it would soon be a city!

And then,—something was wrong! No one could tell just what it was,—but there was surely something. The beavers had worked as hard as they knew how to

be prepared for fall, and fall did not come! It was the Moon of the Red Leaf and the leaves were still green. It was time for Jack Frost and Jack Frost did not come. Day after day the hot sun blazed down on the Hill, and the little springs and streams began to dry up, and the pond-stream trickled very slowly down the mountainside. The leaves began to turn a dingy brown on the trees instead of red, and they fell off very slowly. And still Jack Frost did not come.

It was the Month of the Harvest Moon, now, and Jack Frost should have been there by this time and have frozen several layers of mud on the tops and sides of their houses. But neither the North Wind nor Jack Frost came to the little Pond. Only a hot South Wind came that made the plastered roofs of the lodges so dry that several long cracks

split each one of them, and the hot wind blew the dried mud into dust and scattered it over the Pond until the poor Pond looked as if it had a dirty face.

Father Beaver and all the other old beavers came out in the daylight and swam about, trying to find out just what the trouble was. But no one knew. Grandfather Bull-frog came out and sat on a log and stared solemnly at the hot sky that looked like a big, copper bowl. Then Grandfather Frog said "Ker-chung!" very solemnly and slipped back into the pool, and just in time, too, for a big crane, that had recently come to the Pond, just missed him by a croak.

The crane was not the only newcomer to the little Pond. A pair of bald eagles had suddenly appeared in the tall, dead spruce, and it seemed as if all the deer from the mountain had come down into the lowlands near the Ponds. Something

surely was wrong. The rabbits began to appear in the deep grass in the open places where the beavers had cut the trees, and many foxes were to be seen along the foot of the Hill as the lack of water on the mountain drove them down to the Pond.

And still Jack Frost did not come, and the plastered roofs baked harder and harder until the least puff of wind would blow off a cloud of dust. Every night, the beavers replastered their lodges, hoping and hoping that Jack would come. If he didn't and the rains came instead, then the water would wash the mud away as fast as they could put it on, and then it would be a very easy matter for the bears and wolves to pull their houses apart and catch the little beaver-folk. Oh, if only Jack would come! But he was nowhere to be seen and all that the beavers could do was to keep putting on

fresh coats of plastered mud until the outside of each lodge was a large, smooth dome.

And it was well, oh, very well for the beavers that they kept their lodges this way without a twig or a branch showing. For one day, Father Beaver put his nose up out of the Pond and took a long, long sniff. And the bald eagles uttered fierce, wild cries, and the rabbits and the foxes and the bears and woodchucks and porcupines fled wildly away from the mountain, for the wind had brought news of the worst enemy that Mother Nature ever turns against the forest-people,—
FIRE!

Over the near-by hills and mountains it swept, across the valley, until it reached Long Pond and the Beaver-Pond. Choking clouds of smoke, bits of burning grasses and leaves and burning, biting heat swept over the Ponds until the

waters themselves grew hot and the outside of the little lodges cracked and split in the heat!

Some of the lodges and roofs cracked so that much smoke got into the living-rooms, and the poor beavers fled into the Pond to try to find some place where this terrible enemy could not creep in and find them. If only they could have stayed in the Pond far down under the water all the time,—but they would have drowned! And many, many of the smaller beavers did die from the smoke and the too-long swims in the water, for they found house after house either filled with smoke or crowded to the very doors with frightened little beavers! All the burrows were filled with smoke and it was a terrible time! Hundreds of little forest-people threw themselves into the Ponds to escape the terrible heat and smoke and were saved by the waters.

Old Round-Top could not be seen because of the clouds of smoke that swept over it from the valley below and the burning mountains on either side of it, and it looked as if all the lovely trees on the dear, old Hill would be burned, too. But the rocky sides and crest gave the flames little chance to start there, and the Ponds at its foot stood like soldiers to drive the flames back.

Again and again they swept over the Ponds almost to the Hill. Again and again, the grass flamed and blazed right to the hillside, only to die out against one or another of the big rocks that guarded it.

The pines and hemlocks, with their needles so ready to burn, swayed and moaned as the heat waves passed over them in scorching blasts. But they did not take fire and when another morning dawned, the enemy had passed on over

the Ridge and down the other side. The face of Round-Top had been saved, thanks to the Ponds and the rocks; and the many little homes along its sides, although deserted, were not destroyed.

As the sun struggled through the mists and smoke, what a sight met his eyes! The faces of the Ponds were covered with burned twigs and branches and leaves! Most of the little woodland was burned black, and the lodges in Beaver-Town,—oh, what a sight they were! Cracked and split by the heat, their roofs black from the smoke, many were in ruins, and many beavers of the little town had been killed!

Father Beaver's house was packed to the doors with little beavers who had been so frightened by the roaring of the flames and the dense, black smoke, that if it had not been for Father Beaver's well-built house, which didn't let more than a faint

smell of smoke creep in, they would all have been killed. As soon as the smoke and flames had gone, all of the beavers, big and little, left the houses and went for a swim. Oh, but it was good to breathe the sweet, fresh air once more! Surely, nothing, nothing could be better than just plenty of pure, fresh air!

And then they all looked to see what damage had been done! Many of the little lodges had been cracked up and down and crossways. If they had not been plastered so very thickly, if any logs or branches had been sticking out for the flames to catch hold of, the poor little houses would have burned and their little owners as well. Those closest to the woodlands *had* gone and the beavers felt very badly about them! But there was still a great deal to be thankful for! It was bad enough, but it could have been worse!

The entire little town set to work at once to repair the damage and replaster their lodges. And as they worked, the sky grew gray and cold, and that night the North Wind came howling over the mountain and Jack Frost came with it; and every night he froze the plaster as hard as a stone, harder than he had ever frozen it before. And he put a thicker ice-roof all over the Pond than it had ever known, and he tucked the beavers in so securely and snugly that not an enemy found them all winter! Jack Frost felt very sorry, no doubt, for having stayed away so long, and he was trying to make up as well as he knew how for his faults.

When the ice melted and the March winds and warm rains brought spring back once more, she quickly covered up all the signs of the fire! Flowers and ferns and grasses and small bushes grew as they never had before, until every

blackened stump and burned, fallen tree was hidden.

And now there were many new houses to be built in the town, for Big Brother and Little Brother and Big Sister and Little Sister and all the boy and girl beavers that had been born in the village the same year that they had been, were grown up, now, and ready to start homes of their own. Such a hurrying and scurrying around for islands and desirable building places as there was! If the Pond had not been forced out until it was almost as wide as the old Hill itself, there surely would not have been islands and marshy spots enough to go around!

But, finally, all the young pairs of beavers had managed to find very desirable spots to build; and, to Bobby Lynx, now a full-grown wildcat, gazing down on the Pond from the limb of a big beech on the hill on which he liked to lie, the old

marsh looked as if it were dotted with hundreds of huge beehives! Father and Mother Beaver had surely built a wonderful Beaver-Town.

And there it is to this day.

THE END

The following pages contain questions
with space for the answers to be written
by

The owner of this book.

WHY DO BEAVERS ALWAYS BEGIN A
NEW TOWN NEAR A STREAM?

WHAT DID MOTHER AND FATHER
BEAVER LOOK LIKE?

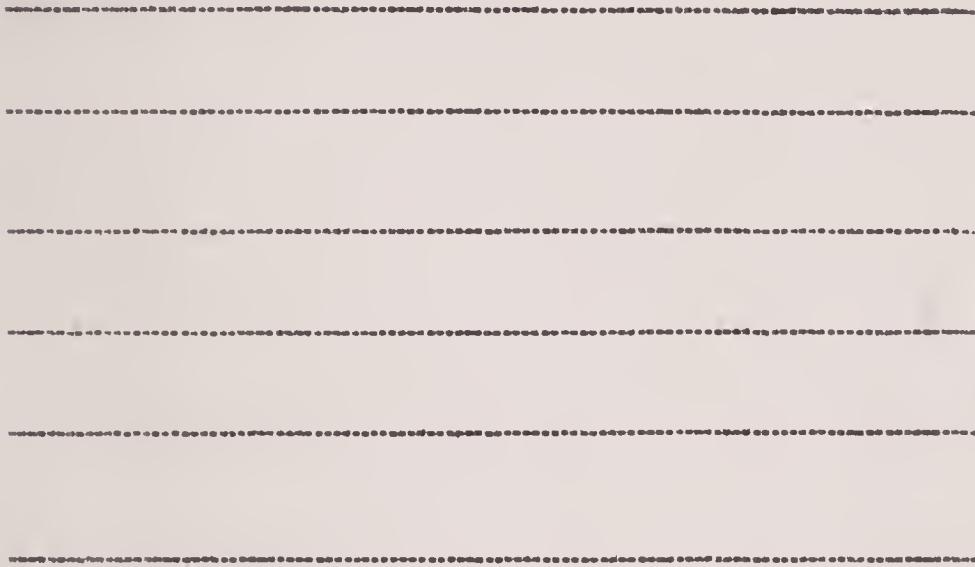
TELL HOW THE BEAVERS' TAILS DIFFER FROM THOSE OF OTHER ANIMALS AND HOW THEY ARE USEFUL.

HOW DO THE BEAVERS BUILD THEIR DAMS?

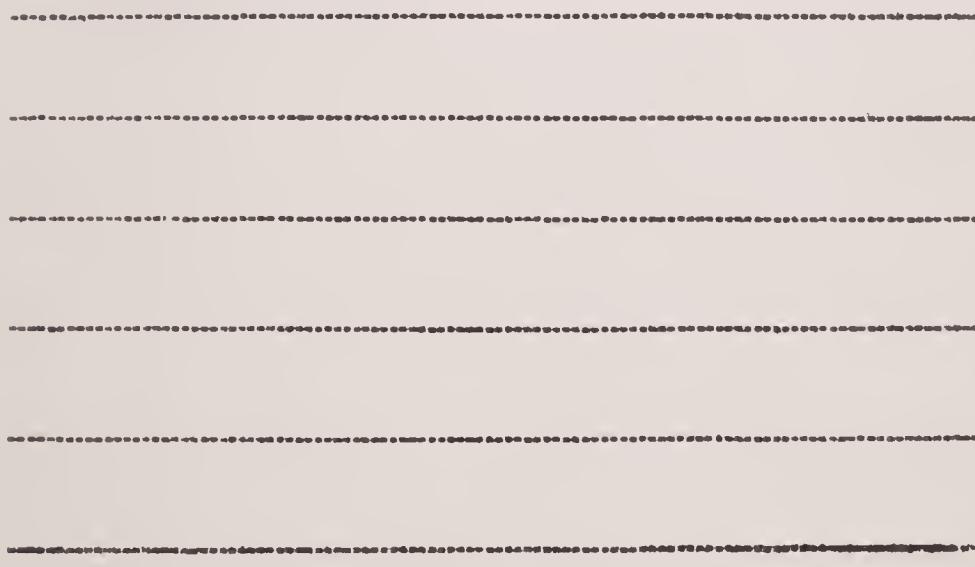
WHAT KIND OF HOMES DO BEAVERS
HAVE?

HOW DOES JACK FROST HELP BUILD A
BEAVER'S LODGE?

WHERE IS THE FRONT DOOR OF A
BEAVER'S HOUSE?

Handwriting practice lines consisting of three horizontal lines: a solid top line, a dashed midline, and a solid bottom line, spaced evenly down the page.

WHAT DO BEAVERS EAT?

Handwriting practice lines consisting of three horizontal lines: a solid top line, a dashed midline, and a solid bottom line, spaced evenly down the page.

HOW DO THEY CUT DOWN TREES?

WHERE DO THEY GET THEIR FOOD IN
WINTER?

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 020 695 318 4